

MEDITERRANEAN BROWN RICE SALAD

Susan Denzer, Chef and Culinary Consultant

Love + Craft Kitchen, LLC

www.loveandcraftkitchen.com



Photo: Love + Craft Kitchen

Mediterranean Brown Rice Salad is a wonderfully light and bright, whole grain summer side dish or entrée that can be served cool or at room temperature. Filled with a variety of tantalizing, health-boosting ingredients, it's bound to be a crowd pleaser.

Either regular brown rice or brown basmati rice can be used. Or, change things up a bit by using a whole grain rice blend.

If served as a side, pair it with grilled, roasted, or sauteed proteins.

The vinaigrette recipe is one to keep handy for use on just about any salad. Whenever possible, choose a good quality **red wine vinegar** either from a specialty oil and vinegar shop or the grocery store. A few grocery store brands that earn high marks include:

- Laurent du Clos Red Wine Vinegar
- Pompeian Gourmet Red Wine Vinegar
- Martin Pouret Vinaigre D'Orléans Vin Rouge
- Holland House Red Wine Vinegar
- Lucini Pinot Noir Italian Wine Vinegar

Make-Ahead:

This salad can be prepared ahead up to the point of tossing with the vinaigrette (through step 3). Add the vinaigrette (in step 4) just before serving or up to 30 minutes ahead. Garnish just before serving.

Makes: 6 – 7 cups of salad; about 1 cup of vinaigrette

INGREDIENTS

Vinaigrette

1/2 cup olive oil

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 small clove of garlic, minced (about 1 tsp fresh, or 1/4 teaspoon dried garlic powder)

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon ground black or white pepper

Salad

2 1/2 – 3 cups cooked brown or brown basmati rice

1 1/2 cups cooked chickpeas (cooked from dry, frozen and thawed, or 1 – 15 ounce can, drained and rinsed)

1 cup chopped artichoke hearts, moisture pressed out (choose frozen + thawed, or canned in water, not marinated)

1 cup cucumber, diced and seeded (or use seedless variety)

3/4 cup diced fresh tomatoes

1/4 cup finely diced red onion
1/4 cup halved Kalamata olives, or more to taste
1/4 cup sliced almonds (optional)
1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese, divided
Fresh basil leaves, chiffonade for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Place all of the vinaigrette ingredients into a jar or small mixing bowl. Shake the jar or whisk the ingredients together in the bowl until combined and fully emulsified.
2. Cook the brown or brown basmati rice according to package directions (about 30 minutes). Drain and transfer to a large mixing bowl. Drizzle 1 1/2 tablespoons of the vinaigrette over top and toss to coat. Set aside and allow the rice to cool completely before adding the other salad ingredients.
3. Once the rice is cooled, add the chickpeas, artichoke hearts, cucumber, tomato, onion, and olives. Gently toss to combine.
4. Pour about half of the vinaigrette over the salad ingredients and toss gently to coat. Add the almonds and half of the feta cheese, then stir to combine. Add more of the vinaigrette, if needed, to lightly coat the salad but avoid over-dressing the salad so that it is sitting in vinaigrette. Depending on the rice, all of the vinaigrette may be used or some may be leftover.
5. Garnish the salad with the remaining feta cheese and the basil chiffonade (thin-cut strips or ribbons). Serve.